

Health Department

March 24, 2017

House Committee on Health Care
900 Court St. NE - HR E
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: HB 3276 - Requires health benefit plan coverage of health services necessary to combat disease outbreak or epidemic

Chair Greenlick and members of the committee; I am Dr. Paul Lewis, the Health Officer for Multnomah County Health Department. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of HB 3276. This bill will help schools, universities, other facilities and Oregon's counties to protect communities around the state by supporting timely and complete response to outbreaks and other public health emergencies.

We have witnessed the consequences of infectious disease outbreaks on our communities, including the University of Oregon (UO) meningococcal disease outbreak two years ago that included seven individuals and killed a freshman; currently the same disease has caused an outbreak at Oregon State University. Portland State University located in our county, is the largest university in the state, and could easily experience a similar or larger outbreak. We know from our public health and university colleagues about the barriers they faced in obtaining protective vaccines for students with health insurance. Although the Meningococcal vaccines can cost over \$200 per shot, this cost should not be shunted from a health insurer to a university or county health department during an outbreak. Similarly, when a serious nursing home outbreak of influenza occurs, there should be no barriers to promptly treating the residents with a preventive drug or vaccine to halt further spread.

Public health dollars are limited, and point-of-care services provided in the context of public health response should be compensated like any other personal health care service through the healthcare payor system. It should cover vaccines and other important prophylactic or curative treatments as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Oregon Health Authority (OHA).

Finally, as called out in the bill, if a designated task force is formed, Multnomah County would be happy to engage as a key stakeholder in that discussion.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my support of this important legislation.

Paul Lewis, MD, MPH
Multnomah County Health Officer
Multnomah County Health Department